

### What do we see when we look at a photograph?

The question, “What is the subject of a photograph” is obviously central to any considerations concerning photography as a cultural object. It is clear that ideas and intentions of writers, painters and choreographers are germane to deliberations about their works being cultural productions. There is an extensive body of thinking that denies photographs can be considered in the same – and that body of writing is correct, than cultural theorists would be limited to considering the objects that photographs present: they could consider the nature of the slum tenements in *Two Ways of Life*, but not how the photographer wanted to present those buildings. Is this claim correct? In what follows I suggest that it is not.

In “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” the Personalist film theorist André Bazin asserted, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” when he asserts, “The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from conditions of space and time that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discoloured, no matter how lacking in a documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model.” The claim is not unique: major philosophers have propounded similar views – indeed it is so common we shall refer to this position as one that argues for “the objective reality of photographs.” The Harvard philosopher Stanley Cavell also argued for the objective reality of photography, claiming that the ontological bond between photograph and object is constitutes a basis for our response to photographs. The aesthetician and cultural theorist Roger Scruton is especially forthright in his assertions about the difference between the relation between a painting and its subject and the relation between a photograph and its subject: in “Photography and Representation,” Roger Scruton argues that the relation between the subject and photograph is ‘causal’ because there is a point-to-point relation between the two. On the causal relation between its subject and a photograph, Scruton states: “If a photograph is a photograph of a subject, it follows that the subject exists, and if x is a photograph of a man, there is a particular man of whom x is the photograph.” However, “if a painting represents a subject, it does not follow that the subject exists, nor, if it does exist, that the paintings represents the subject as it is.”

Bazin famously argued that “All the arts are based on the presence of man, only photography derives an advantage from his absence.” By this Bazin pointed out that painted or sculpted image always embodies an idea or conception of the object (*i.e.*, a thought, in the sense of a Fregean *Gedank*, about the object) while a photograph does not. Photographs are not representations but, literally, reproductions, for they lack the relative autonomy that results from their being presentations of someone’s conception of an object – a conception that is informed by the artist’s attitudes towards and feelings about that object. Scruton has advanced arguments for the same position: In a similar vein, Scruton claims painting offers the painter’s interpretation of his or her subject: a ‘thought, intention or mental act’ mediates between image and object. His assertions are forthright: a photo is an “exact copy” or a “simulacrum” of the subject, while the painting is an “interpretation” of it. And so has the art theorist Rudolf Arnheim: :Painting and sculpture come from the inside out; photography comes from outside in, ” Arnheim states.

The avant-garde filmmaker Peter Kubelka found a cogent way of presenting this idea: In his lectures at New York University he pointed to a tree outside the classroom window, and invited his student audience to imagine that he had made a photograph of that tree through the window, and that a student had made a photograph from the same vantage point. He then asked how the photographs would differ, and what that difference would say: “They have a

value in that they distinguish a little bit of him (the student photographer) from a little of me. So, they say something, not about the tree, but about him and me. So, again, the value of one picture is almost nil," Kubelka asserted. Kubelka arrived at his negative assessment of the artistic potential of photography from this basis, for he pointed out that there would be only slight difference between the photograph that he took and the photograph that the student took, and argued that the narrowness of the differences between the two photographs indicates just how little a photograph is capable of conveying its maker's thoughts about the subject. It therefore lacks a requisite feature of representations, of being able to convey artists' complex thoughts and feelings about the subjects of their representations.

Another consideration bolsters Bazin's claim that photographs are unlike other sorts of images: Bazin's ideas derived from the core insight that a photograph is an indexical sign; what that entailed is that a photograph of an object could not exist if that object had not existed. As concerns paintings or sculptures, that we acknowledge the possible non-existence of the subject of the representation certainly has an effect on our response to the representation: built into our response is our tacit acknowledgment that the subject of the representation could be fictitious (i.e., have no real existence). This acknowledgment is important because it frees us from certain kinds of interest in the subject. Because we know that the subject of a photograph exists, or, at least, existed at some time in the past, we cannot respond to it as freely – for example, we cannot consider its subject as making no claim on our moral concern. The possible non-existence of the subject of representation has fundamental consequences for the phenomenon of representation itself – consequences that have motivated Scruton (et. al.) to deny that photographs are representations. The possible non-existence of a painting's represented subject, they argue, is essential to experience the image as a true representation: I see a handsome, though somewhat disheveled, and pensive-looking young man when I look at Jacques-Louis David's *Self-Portrait* of 1794, but, because I am free to assume that the painter may not have looked much like the figure the painting depicts (in fact, if I know the anecdotes that usually passed along as one acquires the substance that art history courses teach, I realize that shadow on the left cheek conceals a badly disfiguring scar), I can direct my attention to the devices that the painter used to make me see the subject in that way he did (that is as a determined and indomitable artist (and knowing that the painting was done while the painter was in prison makes one all the more capable of considering what the artist is saying with the portrait). Understanding that the picture is not a reproduction, and being able to consider how the painter works to engender an attitude towards the presented subject, are essential to responding to the image as a representation. If we fail to recognize that the figure in the painting might not have resembled in all respects the actual David, we do not respond to the image as a representation.

Consider the contrast between our response to Jean-Louis David's self-portrait and our typical response to a photograph: When I see a photograph of a vain, sneering, brutal-looking Idi Amin, I am compelled to think of the actual man's monstrosity. Pleas that one consider a photograph as a constructed text make us uncomfortable, for one feels one would be something less than human if she were to attribute her visual recoil from the sneering monster simply to the effect of the arrangement of tones and colours on a bounded, two-dimensional surface. Some form of human encounter has taken place (one that might best be explained through Levinas' ideas on the face): I saw Idi Amin, and so saw into him: only would be inclined to say that I came up against his malice and recoiled.

Rudolf Arnheim characterizes this difference between paintings and photographs by stating that because photography is an art of particularity rather than an expression of universality. He asserts that painters are inclined to start from a highly abstract level and would reach individuality only by special elaboration. Photography, on the other hand, would have a

hard time presenting an abstraction. Instead of stating abstractness positively, it can only arrive at it negatively, by eliminating some of the primary data. p.116).

Our interest in photography has an ineluctable cognitive dimension: We know that photographs provide us with information about the appearance of the real world, in a way that paintings and sculptures do not. To be sure, this difference between photographs and other types of images provides no convincing logical support of, or refutation of, the assertion that when we see a photograph, we actually see the real object that photograph depicts; but it does offer support for the proposition that one errs if one collapses photographic images and images of other types into a supposedly homogeneous category or opines that there is an undifferentiated practice one can label "image arts." The evident difference between photographs and other images make one suspect that there might be something to claims for the objective reality of photography.

That Barzin's arguments lead to issues that are core of some of cultural theories' interests in photography should be reason enough to be concerned with them. But my interest in arguments for the objective reality of photography has another, more personal motivation. The position Bazin expounds is the position that I held when I wrote *Image and Identity*. I then wrote:

It does not seem to be unnatural (or to be a violation of our normal use of the term "to see") to say that I saw Leonard Cohen on television last night in a musical production (presented on video), entitled *I am a Hotel*. After all, if we can say that we see tiny insects through a magnifying glass, and bacteria through a microscope, and atomic particles with an electron microscope, and solar flares through a telescope, is it not equally reasonable to say that security guards, sitting in an apartment lobby with a bank of monitors in front of them, see the rear entrance to the building on one of their screens. Or to say that I saw Leonard Cohen on television last night.

I suggested then that a photograph or a cinematograph simply extends or elaborates the causal chain that is responsible for visual perception. Closer yet to Cavell, I remarked

Perhaps the paradox can better be captured by attempting to answer the question: What does a photographic image share with its model? The answer is a surprising one: Everything, almost, except its existence. There is a remarkable degree of resemblance between the appearance of a photographic image of something and the appearance of the thing itself, a high enough measure of resemblance to lend our assertion [the ability to see the past through photographs is one of photography's major appeals] a certain . . . credibility. But it is equally remarkable to be able to say, as we can say about what we see in a photograph, that what we see looks (almost) just like reality, but it does not really exist (now).

Though I there drew tightly together the relationship between the photographic image and its model, I argued elsewhere in that book that the ontological bond between the acoustic image and the object is even closer – and perhaps, as regards sound, the distinction between image and object cannot be drawn at all. I argued that the sound that fills my workroom when I play a good digital-recording of a dog's bark is one whose composition (the sound vibrations that constitute the bark) cannot be distinguished from the composition of the original – the same set of sound waves could be detected and displayed on an oscilloscope whether a tape recording of a bark was played or a real dog, actually present in the room, barked.

However, as I have deliberated further on these matters, I have formulated arguments

against them which seem to me conclusive, and which have brought me to reject the ideas that formerly I propounded. While in 1989, I suggested that it is not a violation of our normal use of the term “to see” to say that I saw Leonard Cohen on T.V. last night, I now believe that the claim I made is incorrect. Proponents of the objective reality of photography have asserted either that claim or, more often, a another proposition that is very close to claim: many of them have said that, although saying that I saw Leonard Cohen on T.V. might deviate somewhat from traditional usage, there is no reason why we should not revise the rules governing the use of the term “to see” to accommodate such assertions. I believe the latter claim is also wrong. I cannot go into all the considerations that forced me to formulate my current (and more theologically-informed) position, that cinematography is a re-inscription of the original inscription that gave rise to objects. But I do want to explain why I rejected both the position I formerly held, for it is the position that Bazin, Cavell, Scruton, Arnheim have advocated.

The basis for the positions that Bazin, Cavell and Scruton and Arnheim have advocated, and that I once did, concerns the different relation that obtains between a photographic image and its model in comparison with the relation that obtains between the image and its model in painting or sculpture. The difference is exactly that which Bazin pointed out, *viz.*, that a photograph offers an organized set of indexical signs, while a representational painting or sculpture offer an organized set of iconic signs. A crucial consequence of this difference is that the appearance of an object in a photographic image guarantees that its object existed at the time the photograph was made, but the appearance of an object in a painting or a sculpture is no guarantee that that object ever really existed. It is one of the sweet miseries of my trade that if I want to incorporate an image of a woman in religious transport in a film I am making, I have to persuade a female person to place herself before my camera and induce her, by some means, to at least the appearance of going into ecstasy. However if I want to sculpt an image of St. Theresa in ecstasy, I don't have to induce someone to experience religious transport, or to perform some semblance of going into that experience, in my studio. Though my sculpture might benefit from the additional details that the close observation of a living model might avail me, it is nevertheless possible for me to create the sculpture without having a model in my studio. But I cannot produce a photograph of the depicting a woman undergoing religious transport without having a model to pose for me.

It is that ontological bond between a photographic image and its model that makes plausible the claim that when we see a poster of Paris Hilton, we are seeing Paris Hilton. After all, when we feel the effects of, say, fire – that is, when we feel the warmth emanating from the fireplace – we experience no discomfort in saying that we are feeling the fire (that is that we are actually feeling the real fire); so if we see the effects that Paris Hilton had on a photographic plate, why should we not say that we are actually seeing (the real) Paris Hilton?

That is the line of reasoning I must block. To explain why I find it unconvincing, I shall begin by comparing what we see when we look at a photograph with what we see when we look into a mirror. Photography has been characterized as a mirror with a memory; that characterization is generally offered to support the claim that just as we see are ourselves when we look in the mirror, we see real objects when we look into photographs. That is, the proposition is generally offered in support of claims like those that Bazin, Cavell, Scruton and Arnheim have offered (and that I once advanced).

I doubt it actually offers much support for the position, however. We would not be inclined to say, if we were talking carefully, that we see the actual object in the mirror: rather we would say we see a virtual image. Only the high degree of verisimilitude prompts us to overlook the distinction between the virtual image and the object, and to assert that the we actually see the object there, in the mirror. To consider the role that verisimilitude plays her we might consider another image that is created in exactly the same way as the mirror image, and so,

presumably, has exactly the same ontological status. Consider the highly distorted reflection of an over-hanging tree we see in the hood of a car, on a summer's day, when heat waves intensify the image's affine distortions and cause the reflection to ripple. We would be disposed to say, when we look at that distorted, rippling reflection of the tree on the automobile's hood, that we actually see a real tree. I don't think so. Rather, we would say that the tree on the hood of the automobile is some sort of phantasm, some sort of mirage, a ghostly non-being – or, less poetically, a virtual image.

The only difference between the image in the mirror and the image on the hood of the automobile concerns the detail of its rendering and the accuracy of its spatial mapping; the difference does not concern the actual ontology of the image. The two images – the image in the mirror and the image on the hood of the automobile – are formed in essentially the same way. That fact that we distinguish the image on the hood of the automobile from the image in the mirror is not that one of them (the image in the mirror) is causally linked to its object while the other image has no such causal link – both images have same ontological relation to their model. This discredits Bazin's claim that the very way the (photographic) image comes into being determines the key features of response: in our example of the mirror and the car-hood, the two images come into being in just the same way, but our responses to each them is quite different than our response to the other.

This discredits Bazin's assertion refutes his claim that the reason we truly see the actual object the photograph depicts has to do with the process by which the image comes into being. If a photograph shares a "process of becoming" with an image in a mirror (and it seems to me that it does), and if a mirror image shares a "process of becoming" with the object we see on the automobile hood on a hot summer day, and if we deny that we see the actual object in the image formed on the automobile hood, then we cannot claim, as Bazin did, that "the process of becoming" guarantees the identity of the image and the model.

But wait! Are we not being too hasty here – or, rather, too assertoric, in simply insisting that we do not see the tree in the hood of the automobile. One could imagine our antagonist in this debate emphasizing that we do indeed see the tree reflected in the hood of the automobile. Sure the reflection is distorted, but that hardly precludes us from asserting that what we see in the reflection is the actual tree – after all, when we look at a tree through a ripply piece of glass, we also have a distorted view of it, yet that hardly prevents us from saying that we seeing a tree. The fact that we see such a wobbly version of the tree on the car hood should not dissuade us from asserting that we actually see the tree.

Let us think further on this, by asking why should we say that we see the actual tree in an accurate mirror reflection (or, perhaps, even in the reflection on the hood of the automobile)? If we sometimes feel inclined to say that we actually see that tree in (or through) the mirror, that is surely because we recognize that there is a real tree in the vicinity that "caused" the reflection. Consider, on the other hand, how seeing the mirror reflection hood (and saying that we see the actual tree in that reflection) differs from seeing the tree in a recent painting that depicts treed garden that lies just outside the wall on which it hangs. We wouldn't say that we see the see the real tree in the painting, so why should we say we see the real tree in the mirror reflection? After all, we deal with the both images in the same way, engage in the same process of matching in both cases: looking at the image, then at the represented object, then at the image again, then at the represented object.

We need not come to this conclusion because the two situations are not analogous. Here is a key difference: If someone interposes himself between the tree and mirror (thus blocking the light), the reflection will disappear; but if someone comes and stands in the door between the painting and the garden, the image in the painting does not disappear. What the fact that the reflection in the mirror disappears when a person blocks the path of light to the mirror

establishes is that the tree causes the image in the reflection, while the fact that image in the painting does not disappear when a person stands between the garden and the doorway shows that the status of the painted representation is different: the garden and the image on the wall are not causally linked, that is, the garden is not the cause of the painted image of the garden in the same way the tree is the cause the reflection of the tree on the hood of the automobile. Now seeing is all about this causal relation: the light rays that reflect off a tree travel to my eye and produce an experience; and, our adversary might point out, the fact that, in being transmitted from the tree to my eye, they bounce off the silver mirror (and are refracted in the process) makes little difference – I see the tree despite the detour the light rays take .

So then, if we admit (and we needn't) – but even if we admit that we see the tree on car's hood or the person in the me, we need not say that we actually see the object depicted in a photograph. There is a possible conceptual muddle in considering the two situations as identical. But we needn't go into it, for there is a clear disanalogy between the photograph and the image in the mirror that overwhelms in importance that conceptual muddle. The fact that photograph of a garden, representing a garden beyond the wall on which is hung would be as little affected by the intercession of a figure between the actual garden and the photograph as the painting in our example would be by the intercession of the figure. Does that make a difference to the ontological status of the representation? It is true, our adversary might respond, that the intercession of a figure between a photograph, hung nearby the object which it depicts, and the actual depicted object wouldn't alter an existing photograph. Consider, however the fact but the intercession of a figure between the object and the camera would make a difference at the time of the exposure was taken would make a difference.. That fact demonstrates that a causal chain exists between the photographic image and the object photographed, and that causal chain is all that need to be established to validate Scruton's claim. Consider, however, that the intercession of a figure between the painter and what the painter is paintings would not necessarily make any difference. Painting and photography are not analogous in this respect, and that disanalogy perhaps justifies according the represented object in a photograph a different status than we accord the represented object in a painting.

At the same time, any assertion that photographs and reflects are fundamentally alike because they come to be through a similar process will miss a key difference between reflections and photographs. To highlight that key difference, I shall consider the implications that follow from the fact that photography is a mirror *with a memory*. What we see in a mirror cannot be transported across space or time. The reflection off the mirror's silver back-surface is not frozen in any medium – no amber preserves the fleeting appearance. In order for the reflection to be transportable it would require some medium to freeze and preserve the reflection. But then the reflection would be reified – it would be, at best, a copy of the object in another material, as a plaster-cast replica of person might be.

Imagine we make a sculpture of a male figure. Our model allows two frames, each filled with plaster of Paris, to be pushed against him, one against his backside, and one against his front. The front and rear of his body leave impressions in the plaster. Then liquid metal is poured into each of the casts, which is allowed to cool and harden, and then removed from the mould, and fused together. No one would want to say that we see the person who served as the model when we look at the sculpture. What that tells us is that an image's being linked to its model by a causal chain doesn't guarantee that when we look at the image we see the actual model.

One might perhaps point out that a possible disanalogy between the mannequin (sculpture) and the photograph, that would discredit our hasty comparison of the photograph and mannikin and our tossing out the claim that when we look at a photograph we see the object photographed because we would never the claim the same of the mannikin. A salient difference is that the photograph is an effect of the object, produced by natural

(photomechanical) means and without human intervention, while the mannequin (sculpture) is by no means the effect exclusively of the person on whom it is modelled.

We can easily deflect that objection: In this hypothetical example of a plaster mannequin, the model's body having been being forced up against the plaster of Paris caused the impression in the plaster. The shape of the impression in the plaster caused the liquid metal to take the shape that it did. If we can speak of the object depicted in the photograph as the cause of the change in the silver halide particles that form the photographic image, we can as well speak of the model's body as the cause of the impression in the plaster and the shape of the plaster mould as a contributing cause to the shape of the mannequin. The model's body was the cause – perhaps the indirect cause, but cause nonetheless – of the form of the resulting mannequin/sculpture, just as much a cause of the resulting form as the subject of the photograph is a contributing cause of the photograph. The making of a photograph, after all, has other causes than the simple presence of the object photographed: there must be an emulsion, exposed to controlled amount of light; the emulsion must be developed in certain chemicals and fixed with certain others, etc.

So, against Bazin's claim that a causal chain guarantees the truth of claims for the identity of image and model, we point out that when we see a plaster-cast sculpture, we do not believe we see the actual person on whom it is modelled. Rather, we would say that we see an image of, or, perhaps, even a representation of the person. Note, too, that the plaster-cast sculpture, a photograph is transportable across space and time; because it preserves an image – a copy of the appearance of an object – in a new material (silver halide particles or colour dyes in a gelatin emulsion), just as the plaster-copy is the copy of the appearance of a person. I think it is clear that we should no more say when we look at the photographic image that we see the object on which it was modeled than we would say that we see the actual person when we look at the plaster-cast sculpture.

Contrary to Bazin's assertions, then, the fact that the model is a the cause of the image does not guarantee that the image and model share a common being. Efforts to assimilate the being of the copy to that of the model have one simple and obvious countervailing proposition to overcome: We distinguish between the original and copy on exquisitely simple grounds – that a copy is an entity that derives its form by imitating, however precisely or imprecisely, aspects of an antecedently existing entity. The model precedes the copy in the order of existence and provides its formal cause (to use that still useful Aristotelian term) for the original, since the form of the copy is conformed to that of the original. This explains why we resist the common view that the copy, no matter how realistic, shares the being of the original. The copy has a different place in the order of existence.

But is the issue really that simply resolved? Certainly (as I shall show) defining what we mean by a different place in the order of existence is difficult – surprisingly difficult, we shall see – and that does not bode well for those of us who want to refute the Bazin-Cavell-Scruton-Arnheim thesis. We turn our attention now to those difficulties. We might achieve some insight into the problems that idea of a copy poses by considering what attributes distinguish representations from copies of other sorts (where "copy" is used in the sense of an incomplete and aspectual likeness). Generally, representations, as distinct from some other sorts of copies, are made of different materials than what they represent and are made using different processes than those which were employed to produce that which they represent. Thus, the copy of the façade of a building on the hoarding around the building has the original as its formal cause, but has different efficient, material, and formal causes from the original – that is, it is not assembled in the same way as the building that is undergoing renovation (it is made with brushes, not with trowels and hammers etc.), it is not made from the same material as the building is made (it is made of pigments in oil, applied to plywood panels, not stone, marble,

concrete, steel) and it is not made for the same purposes (we can't live in the picture on the hoarding).

Generally, a representation is not made of the same material and using the same processes as the object it represents. That is generally the case. But it is not necessarily so. A copy can share efficient and material causes with the original. Suppose, for example, if some company were to produce a replica decanter in the style of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Bordeaux original, using processes and materials as similar as possible to those which were used to create the original 19<sup>th</sup> century item. In that case, then, the original and the replica share efficient and material causes. Furthermore, the purpose of the replica could even overlap that of the original – conceivably, I could use the decanter to aerate tannic wine, so I could use the replica for the same purpose as that for which a 19<sup>th</sup> century Bordelais would have used the original – thus, the original and the replica share a common final cause. Would the replica decanter, by the fact that it shares a purpose with the original, cease being an imitation, or even a representation? I don't think so. It seems to me we could even appreciate it as a replica even while using it for the purposes for which one would use ordinary decanters. For example, I might bring it out only for special guests, to signify what respect I hold them in, and how pleased I am to be able to host them. In that case, the replica's signifying functions would draw upon its representational qualities – remember, a representation, as distinct from a replica, conveys an attitude towards the represented subject and in this case, the representational features of the decanter would convey an attitude of respect for fine crafts of bygone times and a sense of respect for the delights of food and drink and the sharing of company different from those of our so uncivil era. I would hope, then, when I use the decanter, that my guests might appreciate the replica decanter as a representation.

A representation is *generally* made out of different materials and by different processes than the original; however, the concept of a representation is remarkably pliable, and it doesn't seem to engender too great discomfort to encounter representations that are made out of the same material and by the same processes as the original: it is possible to construct a representation of a Brillo Box out of the same cardboard and inks as an actual Brillo Box – and all that makes it seem odd is that Brillo boxes belong to a class of objects, disposable consumer objects, to whose form we pay little heed. And, as our example of the replica decanter shows, the representation and the original can even serve overlapping functions, without compromising our understanding that the replica is a representation. Thus, a decanter that can actually be used as decanter can also be a representation of a decanter.

The effort to understand how an exact copy, precise in all details, and used for the same purposes as the original can nonetheless be a representation brings us up such knotty issues that it can engender an ontological quandary. Ordinarily we attribute a different ontological status to representations than we do to objects, and we attribute this difference to the fact that the representation is a derivative entity, whose form imitates aspects of the form of the original. That the copy (generally) is made out of different materials contributes to the difference in the status of the representation. In the case of our decanter, however, there is no difference in material cause, nor (possibly) in efficient cause. Even more troubling, the original and the replica have a common final cause. For if we have a representation that is, in all respects, identical to the model, would there be any reason to attributing a different ontological status to the representation and the object? Is that not species of ontological recklessness – of allowing levels of reality to proliferate to an unwarranted extent? Yet if we do not attribute a different ontological status to the representation and the object, then we have to forego the idea that representations are derivative entities, and doing so seems to bring a host of problems in its



trail. For example, foregoing the idea that representations are derivative entities seems to render the concept of representation incoherent. For, if our conception of something's being a representation involves its making a reference to something outside itself, something that it derives from, then it must have a secondary, or derivative status in the order of being. Here is an apparent dilemma: the imperative of avoiding ontological recklessness encourages us to acknowledge that representations need not be derivative entities (perhaps to admit that representation can have the status of a supervenient phenomenon), yet the concept of is representation is rendered incoherent if we accord them that status.

The issue of how object can be appreciated as a representation even when it shares efficient, formal, material and final causes with the original that it represents is so difficult and important that we should spend some time with it. To begin to deal with the issues involved, let us switch our example. Suppose a company were to begin manufacturing exact replicas of 1967 Ford Mustangs, and I were to buy one. I would, if I am honest, correct anyone who might assert that I own a 1967 Ford Mustang. I would point out that I own a *replica* of a Ford Mustang – perhaps, if I took the existence of the replica as standing for the widespread admiration the design of the original automobile has elicited and as giving testimony to just how far ahead of its time the original really was, I would call that the reproduction a “representation.” So I could claim that I own a representation of a 1967 Ford Mustang (though using the word here would seem be rather strange). But to claim that I own an actual 1967 Ford Mustang would be dishonest, and to sell the car as 1967 Ford Mustang would be tantamount to perpetrating a fraud. So, our replica might be made by the same processes as the original and from the same materials as the original and could be used as automobile; yet it would still be a representation of a 1967 Ford Mustang (and not a genuine 1967 Ford Mustang). We can distinguish between my Mustang *qua* automobile and my Mustang *qua* replica; as a replica it *is* a derivative entity. Nor need this distinction entail any measure of ontological recklessness, as the distinction simply refers to aspects of one and the same being. (We could have said the same of our decanter.)

Earlier, I made reference to an argument that an acoustic image (a pattern of condensations and rarefactions) might be indistinguishable from what it represents (a pattern of condensations and rarefactions) and that identity has been used to establish that the reproduced sound (the bark, in our example) might have exactly the same ontological status as the original. Our example of the replica Ford Mustang shows that there is no reason why should accept this argument. A representation can be made of the same material as the original, and be used to the same end as the original, and yet be distinguished from the original in the order of existence. But this just the same situation as confronts us with Fido's bark, issuing from the Boul' Mich of 1958. The sound waves in the auditorium *might* be exactly the same as those that existed when Fido barked – to be sure, I doubt that, but let us suppose that the claim is true. The only plausible reason for suggesting that Fido's reproduced bark has a different ontological status than her screen appearance is that the reproduced bark, the “acoustic image” that we hear, is indistinguishable from the original. But the original and the copy of the Ford Mustang, too, are constitutionally identical. To say that pattern of compressions and rarefactions *is* Fido's bark, since it is indistinguishable from the original bark, is just like saying the collection of rubber, metal, plastic, and cloth that I drive when driving my replica 1967 Mustang actually *is* a 1967 Mustang. We would not allow the fact that the original and the replica are materially identical to persuade us that when we see the replica Mustang we are seeing an actual 1967 Ford Mustang; nor should we allow the analogous exactness of the reproduction of Fido's bark persuade us that the acoustic image and its model are (numerically) identical.

Have we formulated a knock-down refutation of the assertion that when we look at a photograph of Paris Hilton, we see Paris Hilton? I believe we have to admit that a thinker committed to the Bazin-Cavell-Scruton-Arnheim thesis might reject our attempts at rebuttal, by

explaining that it is not necessary for Paris Hilton to be in the photograph (as the dog's bark – the spectrum of sounds – is in the sounds produced by the tape recorder) in order to see Paris Hilton in the photograph. Our opponent might point out that his or her proposition does not concern the actual constitution of the object (Paris Hilton is not in the photograph), but concerns, rather, our perception of it (nonetheless we see Paris Hilton in the photograph). This distinction is crucial, he or she might say, inasmuch as the photograph's capacity to show us Paris Hilton concerns something far more subtle than incorporating Paris Hilton's appearance: it concerns, rather, something akin to the phenomenon the post-Wittgensteinian philosophers have discussed under the rubric "seeing-in". The fact is, our opponent might reply, that we *see* Paris Hilton *in* the photo-poster of Paris Hilton, just as we *hear* the dog's bark *in* the sounds that reverberate in the auditorium.

We might unpack this proposition in the following way: What we see when we view the poster of Paris Hilton devolves upon the nature of perceptual interpretation. It is legitimate to say that we see Paris Hilton because we take a range of clues, concerning patches of colour, variations in shades etc. (of none of which we are actually conscious), and interpret them in much the same way as we interpret the range of clues presented to us when Paris Hilton stands in front of us. We *see* Paris Hilton *in* the welter of stimuli that act upon us when Paris Hilton stands in front of us; and we *see* Paris Hilton *in* the welter of stimuli that the poster engenders – both experiences are instances of *seeing* an object *in* the welter of stimuli, and in both cases, we bring order to the welter of stimuli by seeing an object inherent in them.

But what, exactly, does one assert when one says that the experience of seeing Paris Hilton in the welter of stimuli that occur when Paris Hilton stands right in front of the person and the experience of seeing Paris Hilton in the stimuli that occur when one looks at a photographic poster of Paris Hilton are the same? One might attempt to cover over the difficulties that the question raises with Wittgensteinian response: one might protest against believing that it necessary to find any essential features that the two acts share, and counsels instead that we consider how the verb "to see" functions. The verb "to see" covers both acts we have been describing – or it can be revised to cover both acts – and that is all there is to it. The issue whether there is anything essential which the two acts have in common arises out of a Platonic way of thinking that has bedeviled Western philosophy for two and half millennia.

How might we respond to the person who wants to claim that I see Paris Hilton in the flux of stimuli I undergo when Paris Hilton stands in front of me in real life, and I see Paris Hilton equally well in the flux of stimuli that I undergo when the photographic poster of Paris Hilton is presented to me – and do so in a fashion that does not entrap us in some version of essentialism. It could be that what we mean when we say that we see Paris Hilton in both cases is that we can offer many of the same characterizations of the figure we experience when we look at the poster of Paris Hilton as we can of Paris Hilton when he stands before us in the flesh: For example, we can say that the Paris Hilton we see in the picture looks to be overwhelmed by unfathomable forces just as we can say that of the Paris Hilton who stands in front of us. This claim successfully avoids essentialism, because one can stake the claim that both the figure in the photograph and the actual person can be similarly qualified (we can say of either the real life Paris Hilton and the figure in the poster that he looks to be overwhelmed by unfathomable forces), without committing to any view concerning the objects having identical metaphysical status or sharing essential features – that both the real Paris Hilton and figure in the poster can exhibit signs of tiredness does not entail that the two have essentially similar constitutions.

There is real advantage to be gained by construing the assertion that I see Paris Hilton in the flux of stimuli that I undergo when Paris Hilton stands in front of me, and that I see Paris Hilton when I look at a photographic poster of Paris Hilton: that construal provides a manner of

explaining how it is that when I see an exact replica of Brillo box in an art gallery, I see a *representation* of a Brillo box, though when I look at a photographic poster of Paris Hilton, I actually see Paris Hilton himself, and *not* a representation. For semiosis is context-sensitive: the fact that the replica of the Brillo Box is presented in a given context influences our perception/ interpretation of the object – a whole new category of semiotic elements become relevant when we recognize that what we are seeing is a replica. Thus, we have a different set of semiotic responses to the replica of the Brillo box in the gallery than we do the product container itself, but we do not necessarily respond the “dog’s bark” in emerging from the CD player in our living-room differently than we do a dog’s bark in everyday life.

The phenomenological difference underlying this difference in the two modes of sign interpretation is crucial. We respond to the replica of the Brillo box with the recognition that it is a replica. We are not confused: we do not see the replica as a product container – we actually see it as a copy. But the phenomenological shift that carries us between seeing the Brillo box as an actual container of a certain sort of product and seeing it as a representation of a container of that product is just the shift that is necessary for seeing an object aesthetically. So long as we confuse the replica and the original, we do not respond to the reproduction as an aesthetic object – for the response to become truly aesthetic, we have to wait for the recognition to dawn that this is reproduction, not the actual object, so that we can actually see the replica as a copy.

I have tried to outline the advantages of construing the claim that when we are presented with a photographic poster of Paris Hilton, we make out Paris Hilton in it, just as we make out Paris Hilton when Paris Hilton stands in front of us. But I pointed out at the beginning of this paper that I have come to the conclusion that the proposition is simply untrue. The version of that proposition I formulated in *Image and Identity* asserted that it does no violence to our ordinary use of the verb “to see” to say that when security guards look at a video surveillance monitor, they see the backdoor of the building they are protecting. But I have come to understand that the assertion is untrue.

When I outlined my position on photographic imagery in *Image and Identity*, I was alluding to a Wittgensteinian argument that went unstated, because I had other business at hand. The argument I hinted at runs as follows. It is conceptually pernicious to assume that the terms in language are determined by some fixed system, or that they acquire meaning by virtue of corresponding to the basic of the reality. Terms acquire their meaning through their use, and the use of terms change. Sure, some discomfiture is felt when the rules that govern the use of terms change, but the discomfiture the new usage provokes disappears in time. Admittedly, it is odd to claim that I see Fido when a furry ball appears on a movie screen. It is odd because it amounts to asserting that I see an object that exists in another place and time: the Fido I see appears against the backdrop of Parisian streets, and the Citroëns and Renaults that pass by date mostly from the mid-fifties, and none any later than the late fifties, and the cut of the clothes that people wear, and the design of the signs are typical of the late 1950s. Sure, it seems odd to say that I see an object as it was in the past – almost as odd as to say that I see an object through time. But any discomfiture involved in saying that I really see (i.e., perceive) Fido from nearly half a century ago will eventually disappear.

But consider where this lands us: what seems most pernicious about the claim – pernicious because it is incoherent – is that it entails that what I see and what I hear when (the on-screen) Fido barks have different spatial and temporal locations. When the furry white ball on the screen jerks at the same time as a yelp can be heard, I can say that Fido barked. However, implicit in the photographic realists’ claims is the proposition that what I see and what I hear when that the furry white on-screen ball jerks are crucially different: I see Fido in Paris, but the bark that I hear is not in Paris, but in the theatre auditorium. Mostly likely, were this troubling difference to be brought to the attention of photographic realists (I say most likely, because to

my knowledge, this anomaly has never been brought to their attention), they would respond by saying that even though the claim the bark and dog belong to different spaces might seem odd, there is no reason why we shouldn't accept it. If we wish to revise the terms "to see" and "to hear" so that they can be used this way, we are free to do so: the only reason why we feel troubled by this claim is that we have a prior commitment to essentialist claims bedevils our thinking – abandon essentialist thinking and the troubled feeling evaporates..

However, this Wittgensteinian-styled semantic pragmatism can be turned against the photographic realist, I believe, by showing that theoretical commitments of the sort Wittgenstein strived to avoid are responsible for leading proponents of the objective reality of photography to the view of photographic images they has so vigorously defended over the years. Wittgenstein's method for dissolving philosophical problems was to examine how we actually use language. Let's consider how we actually use the term "to see."

Suppose your child wakes up from a nightmare, and claims to have seen a ghost. You do not respond to the situation by telling yourself: "Ah, if my little one fantasized (dreamt, hallucinated) a ghost, then she actually saw a ghost. So my duty now is to explain that some things we see have real world correlates, and other things we see do not have real world correlates. She needs to understand whatever has simply subjective existence can do no physical harm, so I will try to get her to understand that, though she really saw a ghost, what she saw is not a ghost that can do her any physical harm. I must teach her the difference between seeing real things and seeing unreal things." No, you do not do that; rather, you try to persuade her that she did not really *see* a ghost, but only imagined it. How do you go about that? You show her that there is no ghost about, and you do that by showing her that you cannot touch the ghost and you cannot smell the ghost.

Of course, the child protests that the ghost has disappeared. Furthermore when the ghost comes back, she will be able to touch it, she insists – she might even be required to engage in a tussle with it, as the ghost attempts to suffocate her. Everyone knows that with that protestation, one reaches an impasse – and one probably shifts strategy and tells the child that ghosts don't like light, so the night-lamp can be left illuminated.

These efforts to comfort the child are really efforts at getting her to see how we use the verb "to see." We point out that can see only that which is actually present. If it is not actually present, we don't really see it: we might imagine it, hallucinate it, dream it, fantasize it, or whatever, but we cannot *see* – really see – something that is not actually present. The verb "to see" belongs to the class of words that are regulated by the distinctive grammar of perception terms, which are a subclass of the class of awareness terms, which are a subclass of the class of psychological terms (to which class Wittgenstein devoted such a large portion of his thinking). As with all psychological terms, we must wean ourselves from the conviction that the terms refer to psychological process and from the belief that we understand those terms through acquaintance with the processes to which those terms refer. Instead, we must shift our attention to discerning the role the term plays in that form of life which we call awareness. It is only by this that we might grasp the distinct role which perception terms play in our language concerning mental acts; otherwise, we strive vainly to attach the concept of seeing to a determinate mental state, and attempt to ascertain whether "seeing" has taken place by discerning whether or not that mental state occurred.

Another example: the procedure I would follow to determine, for example, whether or not I actually see a mouse wearing a hat would be to look for some additional perceptual evidence of the presence of a hat-wearing mouse in my immediate vicinity (or to assess the likelihood of their being a hat-wearing mouse in my immediate vicinity). The fact that I use that procedure indicates an important feature of perception terms: the grammar that governs perception terms is such that by saying that one sees (hears, smells – generally perceives) an object one stakes

a claim that the object actually exists, in one's vicinity. That is why we verify a claim that someone sees a hat-wearing mouse by searching in the vicinity for a hat-wearing mouse that we can touch and can interact with.

That an existence claim concerning objects in the speaker's immediate vicinity is implied by the use of a perception term explains why we attempt to verify, or to discredit, a perceptual claim (for example the claim that I see a hat-wearing mouse) by establishing whether or not there is an actual object that matches the object one claims to see in one's immediate vicinity (by establishing whether or not there is a hat-wearing mouse in one's vicinity). That existence claims concerning objects in the speaker's immediate vicinity are entailed by perception claims explains the crucial role that the concept of a mediating mental representation (e.g., an image) plays: if someone claims to see X and there is no actual X in the person's vicinity, then we say that person is imagining or hallucinating, but not perceiving. We create (a fictitious?) mental image to satisfy the requirement that there be an immediate object of awareness – a theoretic construct (the image) is introduced to explain the experiences one judges oneself to have. But the difference between seeing a night-light and “experiencing” (hallucinating, imagining, dreaming) a hat-wearing mouse is that what one sees (experiences) when one sees a night-light is a public entity, but what one experiences (but does not see) but rather hallucinates or dreams when one sees a hat-wearing mouse is not a public entity. That is why one cannot really see hat-wearing mouse. Were the child that “saw” a ghost a little older, one would surely explain to her that she did not see a ghost; rather she imagined it, or dreamt it, or hallucinated it – the basis for our judgement that the most likely explanation of our little one's experienced is imaginary is that we discern that it is highly unlikely that what she saw was a public entity.

If I issue a claim to see something when that something is not in my vicinity, my claim will be discounted. It should be no different with claims about seeing Fido through a photograph: the Fido whose image I see on the screen, walking along Boulevard Ste. Michel toward Place des Arts in 1958, is not in my spatio-temporal vicinity. (This is exactly what proponents of the objective reality of photographs claim. Recall Walton's assertion: “With the assistance of the camera, we can see not only around corners and what is distant or small; we can also see into the past. We see long deceased ancestors when we look at dusty snapshots of them.”) The requirement of spatial adjacency explains the difference between my claiming to see microbes through my microscope and my claiming to see Fido on the screen: The microbes are there, in the agar on the glass slide mounted on my microscope's slide holder – perhaps I could even infect myself with them if I were to fail to exercise appropriate caution; but Fido is not in my vicinity, and any abuse or temptations that I might employ to prove to myself that she is in my vicinity do nothing to provoke her into actually biting me. Even the intruder that I might see on the monitors at the security guard's post in my building is actually in my vicinity, and might actually harm me if were to walk up and confront him.

But what about the auditory image? To consider the ontology of the auditory image, let us develop another example. Suppose that I am reading at home, on a winter's evening. It is pitch-black outside, and I am alone, so I put on the television to keep myself company. I don't really pay attention to whatever is on – it's simply a matter that I have become a little anxious, and bored, by being alone, and I crave company. I continue with my reading, when I think that I hear the telephone ring, first once, then a second time. I look up from my book, then listen for it to ring a third time, but it doesn't come. Then I look at the television, and see that an actor on the screen is talking on the telephone; so I conclude that what I heard issued from the television, and not from the telephone on the table on the other side of the room.

Proponents of the objective reality of photography could claim that such auditory experiences support his position. After all, we might express what happened by saying that telephone I heard ringing was the telephone that I see on the screen. But here is a curiosity:

though the telephone I see when I heard the ringing existed in the time and space when the story was shot (say Paris, 1958), the ringing I heard exists in my living room. I want to explain why I disagree with that analysis of the situation. To explain this, however, I need to make a few additional remarks on representation.

Several art theorists have shown the relevance of Wittgenstein's remarks on "seeing-as" to the concept of representation. They are apposite to our problem as well. When I see the variegated black-and-white tones in the poster of Paris Hilton, I recognize that their configuration bears a relationship to Paris Hilton's appearance. I see the array of shapes and tones *as* Paris Hilton. One could imagine someone of proponents of the objective reality of photography assenting to this: "That just confirms what I said," he might say. "Interpretation is implicit in seeing; it is not a secondary phenomenon. Our seeing Paris Hilton in the photographic poster is a part of the subject's response to the poster."

But that is just what Wittgenstein denied: he pointed out that "seeing" and "seeing-as" are different phenomena. " 'Seeing as . . . ' is not part of perception. And for that reason, it is like seeing and again not like it," Wittgenstein said. "Seeing-as" places what is seen against a background of experiences of other objects. When I see Jastow's duck-rabbit as a duck, I see the shapes and I recognize its similarity to other ducks (and to other pictures of ducks) – that is, I respond to the picture by placing it in the context of other experiences I have had. When my experience switches, and I see the duck-rabbit as a rabbit, then I have responded to the picture by placing it in a different context – I have understood its relation to a different set of experiences, of rabbits (and pictures of rabbits). That is what Wittgenstein meant when stated, "what I perceive in the drawing is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects."

We see a Necker cube sometimes as a processive form, and sometimes as a recessive form, though in both cases we see the same lines, laid out on the paper in the same way – that's the sort of phenomenon that requires the distinction between seeing and seeing-as. We see Wittgenstein's rabbit-duck figure now *as* rabbit, and now *as* a duck, but we *see* the same tones laid out in the same way on paper in both cases. That is the difference between "seeing" and "seeing as."

But that understanding depends on a prior, and more basic, understanding. We see an arrangement of coloured forms on a two-dimensional surface and recognize, for example, a body tied to a tree and pierced with arrows. When the image is pretty accurate, we arrive at the recognition in an instant; it occurs in a similar way to that in which we see the forms in a photographic portrait of Paris Hilton *as* Paris Hilton, and that response is immediate and occurs unbidden. We see these shapes and tones, and we see as well their resemblance to the appearance of a person whom we know.

We can now think about how we might unpack the claim that when you look at a photograph of Paris Hilton, you actually see Paris Hilton. One might mean by that claim what would mean when what looked at Zeuxis' encaustic painting and claimed to see grapes – that is, one might mean that one sees shapes and colours in an encaustic by Zeuxis, and sees as well the shapes' resemblance to a bunch of grapes. But if all you mean when you claim to see Paris Hilton in a poster is that you can identify the resemblance between visual forms, then you would not be making any identity claims of the sort that photographic realists stake. All you would mean is that you recognize the resemblance between an array of shapes and tones and the real Paris Hilton, just as you can notice the similarity between the arrangement of colours and tones on canvas and a distinctive individual we know to be Jean-Louis David, or between aural qualities (the rhythms and assonance) of the last several lines of Matthew Arnold's famous poems and the sounds of the surf on Dover beach – and no one would want to make any claims for identity of the poem's aural pattern and the natural sounds. Such a rejoinder would also constitute a

repudiation of any claim that photographic images have a different character than other sorts of images because what we see in photographs has a different ontological status than what we see in paintings or sculptures.

Of course, what we see in photographs has a different ontological character than what we see in paintings and sculptures: for what we see in the photograph has the actual object as its efficient cause, and not, as is the case with what we see in a painting or a sculpture, just its formal cause. That difference in causation results in there being a different relation between what we see in the photograph and the world than there is between what we see in painting or a sculpture and the world. But we should not allow that fact to convince us that, in the case of photography, the relation between what we see in a photograph and its worldly model is one of identity.

I believe the essential error behind claims for the objective reality of photography is an oversight concerning the world-making function of perception. That perception's world-making functions are embedded in the very structure of our language is one reason why it is always prudent to pay heed to the way that we actually use words in ordinary discourse. These world-making functions are two different sorts: one sort concerns the activity of building a coherent object world, and the second sort concerns relating the material that goes into building that world to the self (so that world that I construct I understand to be *my* world). What both sorts of functions have in common is that they depend upon the integration of a plethora of elements into a coherent structure. This processing goes on mostly beneath our awareness, though there are occasions when the coherence is momentarily ruptured, and we get a glimpse of the mental operations involved. The factors involved constructing this coherence are many, but among them is the integration of reports from different sensory modalities, the integration of reports from the same sensory modality at slightly different times, and integration of different reports that result from different forms of attention. These factors are instrumental in the construction of spatial and temporal and coherence – and when a percept cannot be integrated into such a coherent construct, we discount it. Suppose I hear a telephone ring. I look up, thinking that it is my telephone I hear. But I immediately sense that something is wrong – I haven't picked up the receiver, but no more rings come. Still, I realize, it might have been a wrong number. I want to know whether I heard my telephone ring. I begin to look for clues to help me identify what I heard by synthesizing with other facts about the present world of my experience. I notice an actor on the television is speaking into a phone, and realized that at first, I had synthesized perceptual clues incorrectly. I reconstruct a new world out of the clues, one with a greater degree of explanatory cohesion.

My illustration is a gross example of the process at work, but the same sort of sorting, rejection and reconciliation goes on at more elementary phases of the construction of a unified, coherent picture of reality. Suppose we are watching television and we see and hear the dog Fido bark. Even if the "acoustic image" (the sound waves present in your apartment) were identical to the sound waves that would be produced were Fido to enter your apartment and bark, that identity would still not be sufficient to establish that Fido's bark is actually in your room. The coherence conditions referred to above would not be met. To claim that Fido's bark is present in the room when Fido herself is not is to postulate an assertion that defies the principles we use to construct a coherent image of the world. Thus, the belief that you heard Fido bark would be disconfirmed when one tried to synthesize it with other data in the every changing flow that makes up experience.

Even less consistent with those principles would be the claim that we see Fido walking along Boulevard St. Michel towards Place des Arts in 1958, but hear her bark in our apartment fifty years later, in the year 2008. It is precisely our inability to synthesize our visual perception of Fido near Place des Arts with our other percepts that compels us to deny that we are really

seeing Fido. Proponents of the objective reality of photography would claim that we see Fido in a space and time discontinuous with our own (we see Fido on Boul' Mich in 1958) – and worse, that even though the Fido we see convulse occupies a space and time discontinuous with our own, the bark that we hear when we see the convulsion belongs to the same space we occupy. But that claim defies the rules that allow us construct a unified world through perception, rules that depend on our being able to distinguish perceptions from other conscious states. Our construction of a world in perception requires the concept of an entity – and every entity is embedded in a consistent spatio-temporal framework. The entities we sense exist in a time identical to that we occupy, and in a space contiguous with that which we occupy. Seeing an event (involving entities) that existed in the past would require that we can see through time, and we cannot. “Seeing” is a perception term exactly because that possibility is forbidden.